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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
8 December 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Fighting continues in coastal Binh Dinh Province. Enemy forces are also putting up stiff resistance to allied sweeps in III Corps.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Fighting was reported on 7-8 December in northeastern Binh Dinh Province between allied troops and elements of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division Paras. 1-5). Enemy forces are active in the Bu Dop area along the Cambodian border and are putting up stiff resistance to allied sweeps elsewhere in III Corps (Paras 6-9).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Premier Kosygin has told the Swedish prime minister that he did not think Hanoi would react to a US bombing halt (Paras 1-2).

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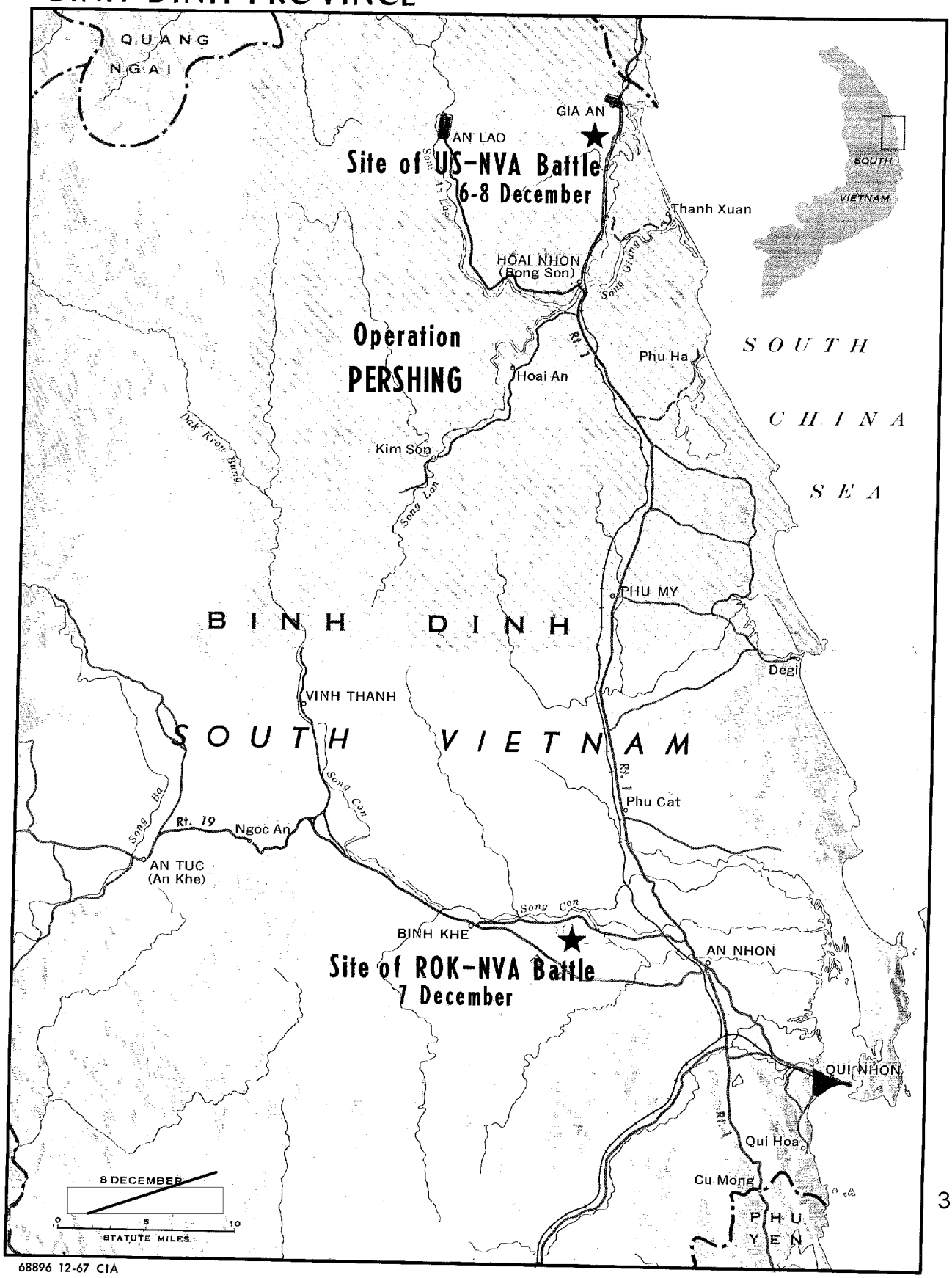
BINH DINH PROVINCE



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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Fighting continued on 7-8 December in northeastern Binh Dinh Province between US forces in Operation PERSHING and apparently revitalized elements of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division. More than 250 enemy soldiers have been killed during three days of fighting. American losses are 16 reported killed.

2. The action began on 6 December when a helicopter patrol was fired on from what appeared to be a deserted village some 12 miles north of Bong Son. Two companies from the 1st Brigade of the US 1st Cavalry Division were flown into the area and almost immediately encountered stiff resistance from enemy troops in well-fortified, heavily camouflaged bunkers. The village itself has been seized and US and South Vietnamese troops are attempting to block the enemy force--identified as the 1,500-man 22nd Regiment of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division--from escaping into the mountains to the west. Nine US companies are reported closing in on the fleeing Communists, trying to force them toward four South Vietnamese companies which are blocking the way to the mountains on the western perimeter of the battle area.

3. The Bong Son battleground is in the vicinity of one of South Vietnam's major rice-producing areas, and this may have been one of the main reasons for the enemy's presence there. The renewed fighting in the area after a lull of several months recalls indications that the Communist campaign farther west in the highlands late last month was designed to draw American forces from the coastal lowlands and give the enemy easier access to the rice-rich coastal areas.

4. Operation PERSHING, a long-term search-and-destroy operation, has accounted for more than 4,500 enemy troops killed and 10,100 Communist prisoners taken since mid February. The recent upsurge in fighting by elements of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division in this area also suggests that the enemy has received replacements and supplies and is now prepared to increase military activity throughout the province.

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5. Another subordinate of the 3rd Division has been identified in combat with South Korean troops to the south of Operation PERSHING. The 8th Battalion of the 18th Regiment, together with a Viet Cong local force unit, lost some 60 killed in a sharp 24-hour battle on 7 December in an area some 15 miles northwest of the provincial capital of Qui Nhon.

Enemy Forces in III Corps

6. Sporadic action continues in the Bu Dop area along the Cambodian border and Communist units are putting up stiff resistance to allied sweeps elsewhere in III Corps.

7. A Viet Cong battalion launched a ground attack against a US 1st Division base being constructed just south of the Bu Dop Special Forces camp during the early morning hours of 8 December. Four Americans were killed and 48 of the enemy. The attack failed to breach the US defensive perimeter. The Communists also shelled nearby Bo Duc district town and another 1st Division position in the area, causing light damage. Allied positions in this sector have been subjected to occasional mortar and rocket attacks and ground probes for the past nine days.

8. On 7 December a South Vietnamese Army battalion lost 15 killed and 47 wounded in a clash 17 miles north of Saigon in Binh Duong Province. A US helicopter pilot was also killed and four US helicopters were downed. On the previous day a US 1st Division company reported 10 killed, 88 wounded, and 14 missing in another fight in Binh Duong Province, some 32 miles north of the capital. In both of these engagements the enemy units fought from well-constructed bunkers and underground tunnel systems. Enemy losses were reported as light.

9. In the immediate Saigon area, an estimated 60-man Viet Cong unit attacked a South Vietnamese Regional Force company on 5 December, killing one soldier and

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wounding four. Although the attack lasted only 15 minutes, the appearance of an enemy force of this size less than than two miles from Saigon is a new show of boldness by the Viet Cong in this area.

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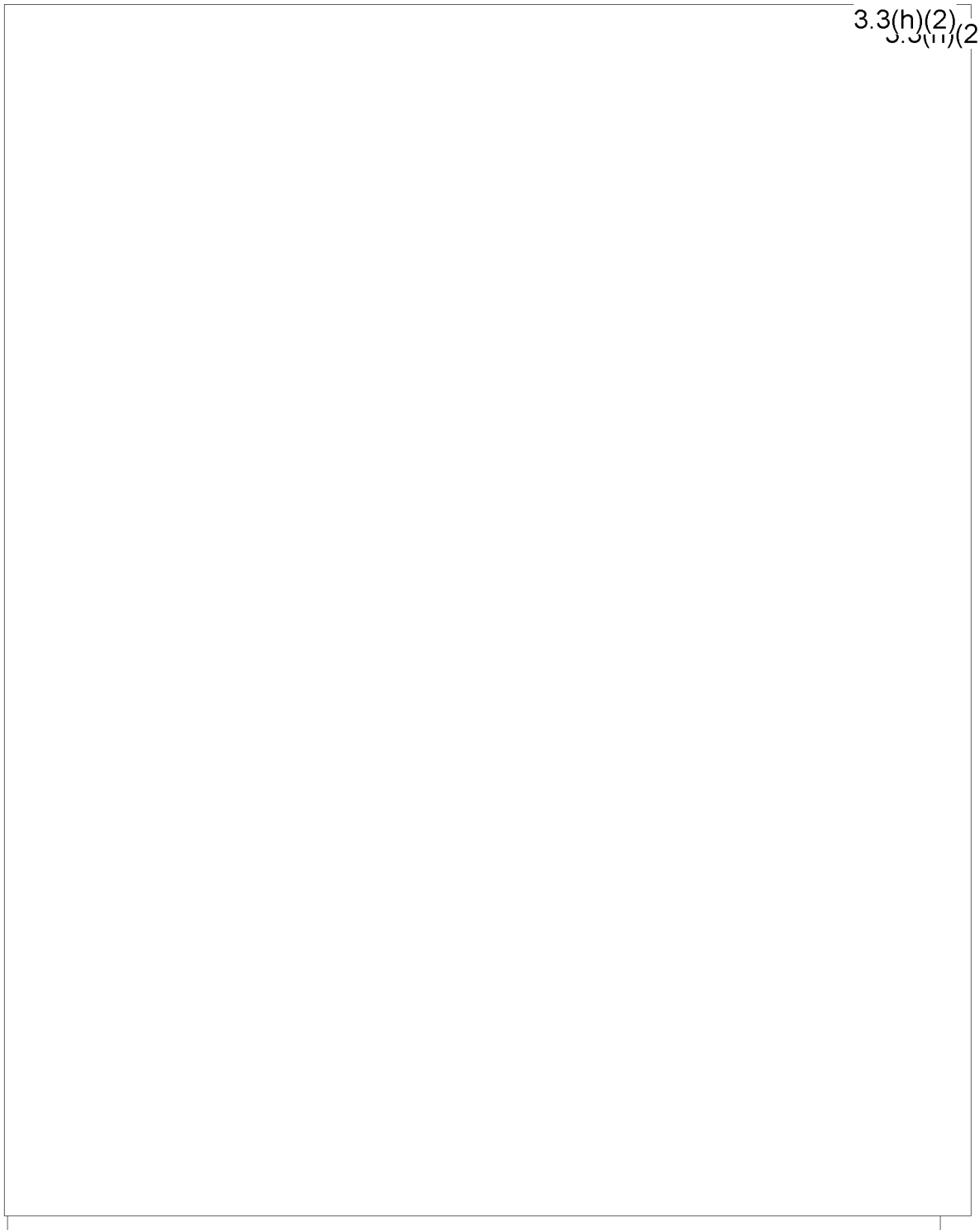

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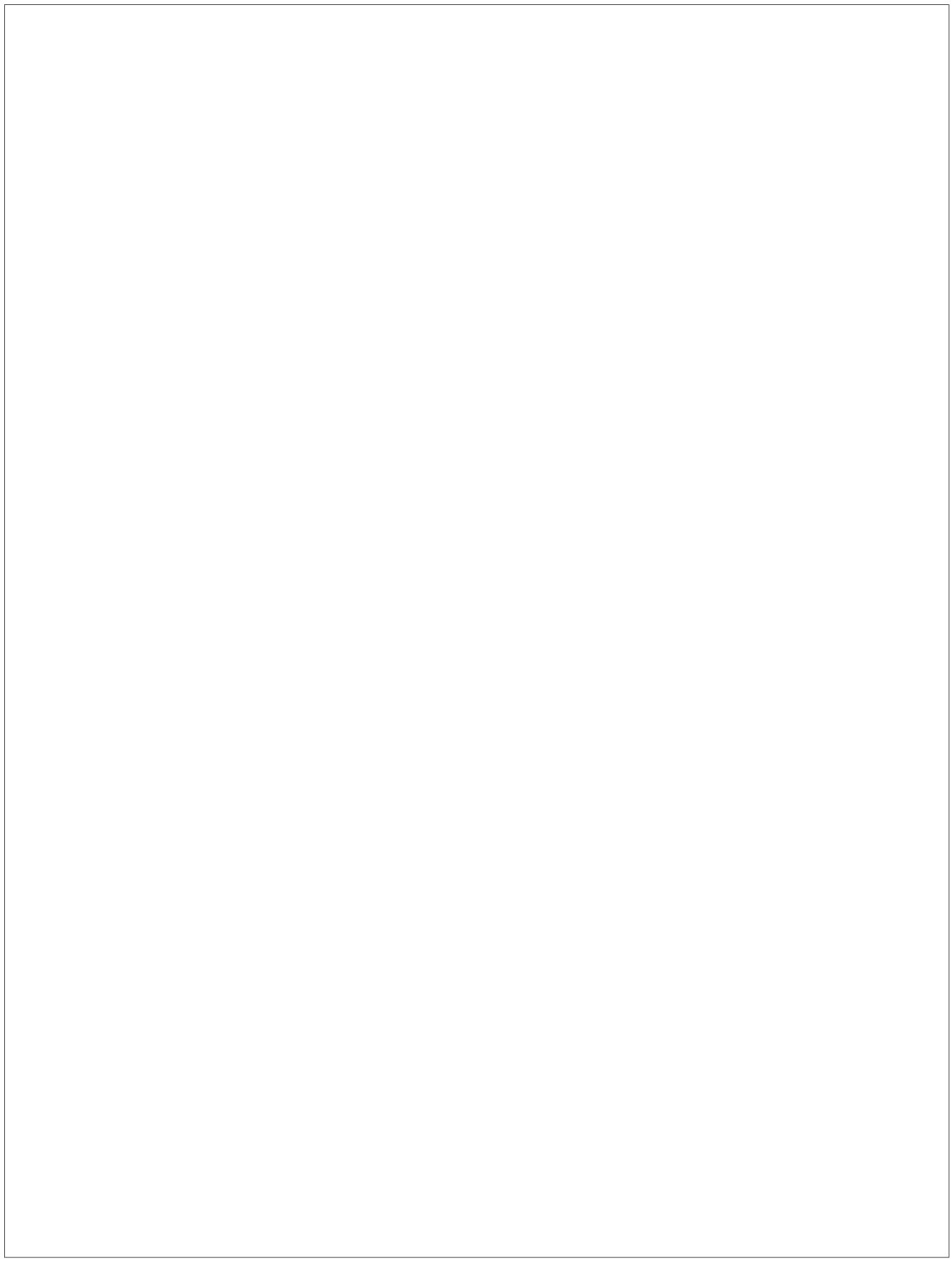

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. According to a British Embassy official in Stockholm, Swedish Foreign Minister Nilsson reports that Premier Kosygin, very pessimistic about prospects for peace in Vietnam, said he did not think Hanoi would react to a US bombing halt. He further stated that Hanoi was completely independent of Moscow or Peking.

2. In earlier press reports on his talks with Kosygin in late November, Nilsson indicated that the Soviet Premier had held out little hope for Soviet peace initiatives, stressing that Hanoi must make its own decisions. Kosygin's comment about possible results of a bombing halt is at variance with unofficial remarks by some lesser Soviet officials who have been attempting to paint a rosy picture of prospects if the bombing is halted.

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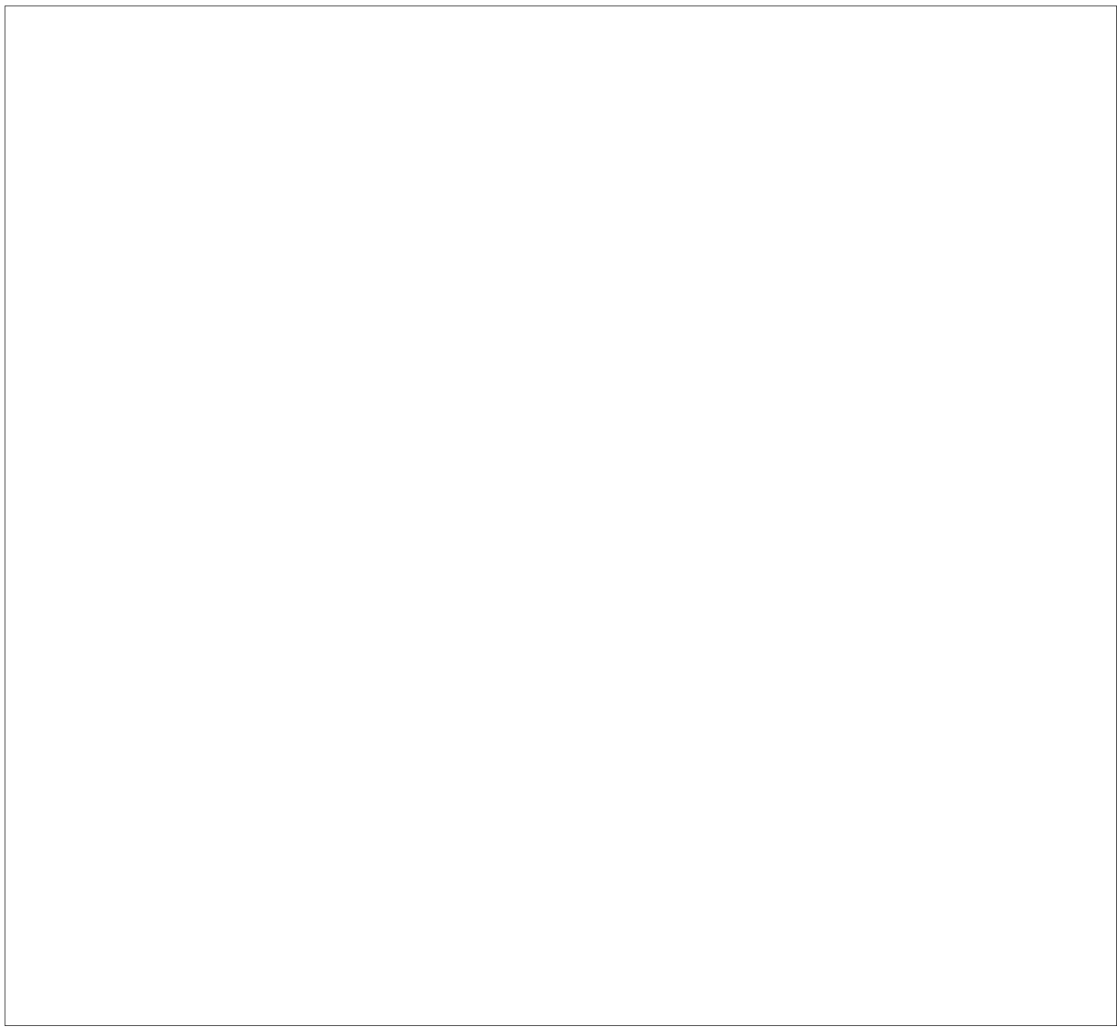

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